

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-14 (canceled)

Claim 15 (currently amended): A method of loading wafers into a semiconductor manufacturing apparatus, said method comprising:

placing a wafer cassette on a support member of a load port, wherein the support member has a plurality of kinematic coupling pins protruding from an upper surface of said supporting member and arrayed to support the cassette;

measuring the load exerted by the cassette on the support member by a plurality of sensors that are integrated with said kinematic coupling pins, and determining whether the bottom of the cassette is present at a plurality of spaced-apart sites above the support member, wherein said sensors are actuated only when a load is exerted on said coupling pins, and wherein the sensors will be actuated when a wafer cassette supported by the coupling pins exerts said load on the coupling pins but not when the load is exerted on any part of the upper surface of said support member without being exerted on said coupling pins;

comparing the measured load to a predetermined value;

issuing a control signal only if the bottom of the cassette is determined to be present at each of said sites, and the measured load exceeds said predetermined value; and

commanding a robot to transfer wafers from the cassette into a chamber of the manufacturing apparatus in response to the issuing of the command signal.

Claim 16 (currently amended): The method of loading wafers as claimed in 15, wherein said measuring of the load comprises measuring the loads exerted by the cassette at ~~each of said spaced-apart sites~~ a plurality of spaced-apart sites above the support member.

Claim 17 (original): The method of loading wafers as claimed in 16, wherein said determining whether the bottom of the cassette is present at said plurality of spaced-apart sites comprises comparing the loads measured at said sites to one another.

Claim 18 (original): The method of loading wafers as claimed in claim 17, wherein the control signal is issued only if the loads measured at each of said sites are substantially the same.

Remarks/Arguments